

## D1. Where in the budget process can I have the most positive impact, and why?

The budget sets out how the government will raise funds and distribute them to ministries, states and local structures responsible for delivering basic services, such as health. In general, the budget cycle consists of four stages (107) (see Chapter 2, module 2). National media should understand their government's budget cycle so that they know when to cover issues, inform discussions and help audiences to contribute to and monitor the outcome of decisions. There are four stages.

1. Planning and preparation are the beginning of the budget cycle. The media's role is in making the cycle easy to understand and to indicate where the general public might be involved. The media must have access to budget documents during this stage so that they can help their audience to engage with decision-makers and to understand how the cycle starts. The media could help their audience to engage by holding debates and discussions with budget decision-makers and in drama, features and analysis. Covering the budget over time helps audiences to understand the stages of the process and the consequences of government decisions.
2. At the stage of analysis and approval, the media can help the public to attend parliamentary select committee hearings by announcing when and where the hearings will be held and how and who can access them. They can also build understanding of and provide updates on the approval process. The media can help civil society to look critically at the budget to ascertain its conformity with national priorities and seek further clarification where necessary.
3. During implementation, the media can help citizens to hold the government (at all levels) to account by measuring the impact of budget allocations, disseminating the findings and monitoring budget spending by engaging with authorities and service providers.
4. The media can monitor budget expenditure at each stage, while the government monitors and evaluates its expenditure on health for UHC and reviews its expenditure. As in the other stages, the media can track the reviews and compare them with CSO and NGO evaluations of expenditure.

The results of analysis and monitoring of the government's health budget should be shared strategically by knowing when and how to lobby decision-makers, with evidence to support the arguments about what should change, and why (97). For example, when the national budget is presented, a news story or drama could indicate the overall changes in the budget since the previous year or compare funding for the health sector with that for other sectors or with the health budgets of neighbouring countries. Consider appropriate contributors to whom the audience will listen, and invite them to be involved in covering an issue.

### Chapter 3. Content for civil society organizations, the media and parliaments

#### Module 2. The role of the media

#### Section D. When and where in health budgets can I play a part?



**Health budget literacy, advocacy and accountability for universal health coverage**  
**Toolkit for capacity-building**

**Chapter 3. Content for civil society organizations, the media and parliaments**

**Module 2. The role of the media**

**Section D. When and where in health budgets can I play a part?**